Rt. 12, Frederick, Md. 21701
1/25/78

Mr. Jerry Cohen
Newsroom
Los Angeles Times
Times Mirror Square
Los Angeles, Ca. 90053

Dear Jerry,

As soon as I received your note of the 10th I started to write Donald R. Jordan in the way you suggested, through your own reporter to preserve Jordan's detachment. I was in the second graf, trying to introduce myself to Jordan, when my lawyer phoned about the most unusual of my many FOIA cases - one in which I sought, among other things, to prevent a media event by the FBI and to diminish the captivity of reporters to official sources. As George Lardner of the Post will I'm sure say, among many, this extends to those who agree with me about nothing.

There was quite an intensive period of preparing for the emergency hearing. Then there was the hearing. Lardner's story encapsulates what happened. I enclose a copy for Jordan, as part of an introduction.

After thinking about this a little I've decided that as a measure of further reassurance for Jordan I'd write him through you and John Kendall so you will both know what I write him about, that I am asking no properly secret information from him, and my purposes.

After my experiences with Garrison it became clear to me that there was no possibility of even superficial unity among those of us who were not satisfied with the official investigation of the JFK assassination. Until then I had strong disagreements but I never aired them. Since then I have found the middle a lonely place. For some years I was entirely alone in my views and methods. Now a few of the responsible ones see things as I do and work and intend as I do.

You may recall that although I had agreed to be the technical expert at the Shaw trial you did not see me there. The N.Y.Times reported my presence at the counsel table of the prosecution but in fact I was never in the courtroom. When I learned the essence of the so-called case against Shaw I refused to be part of it, told Oser and Wardell they would lose and how they would lose, and that in my belief they should lose. I returned home and stayed there. Among those who can confirm this to you is the one LA reporter who has stayed in touch with me over the years and remains a friend, Art Kevin.

I am not and never have been a conspiracy theorist, as they are called. I began as a reporter and an investigative reporter, was a Senate investigator and in World War II an intelligence analyst, and the manner of my work is what you would expect of this background.

I have not been pursuing a whodunit. This is because I regard the assassination of a President as the most subversive of crimes in a society like ours. In the course of bringing as much fact as I can to light I also examine the functioning of our institutions. Each of these aspects of my work makes me very unpopular with those agencies who have something to hide, particularly the FBI and the CIA, less the Secret Service. They have waged an effective behind-the-scenes campaign against me over the years. My first knowledge of this came from a Member of the House Judiciary Committee in 1966. It was repeated by some of those who were interviewed by agents after I interviewed them. They on a radio appearance I turned on a private contractor used by the CIA. Before he "defected" he filled me in, including with carbons of what he filed and other records.

As I know the judge stated and believe the Lardner story indicates I am largely responsible for the 1974 amendments to the Freedom of Information Act. Since then I have made stronger efforts to obtain the various spook records on me. I have some from both the FBI and the CIA and they are incredible. Even with my experiences I never expected to find what actually did happen. Hoover, for example, told LBJ that my wife and I held an annual celebration of the Russian revolution and thus, effectively, prevented any interest in the content of my first book. As of today I have received no single complaint about it and its content remains totally unfaulted. The actuality is that there was an annual religious event. The rabbi of the Jewish Welfare Board, as soon as the high holidays of September were over, brought Washington area service personnel to our farm on a picnic. Their kids could see eggs hatch, play with ~~kiss~~ chicks and ducklings, and fondle tame farm animals. It was no more. And two months early, almost, for that revolution.

In a careless moment someone in the CIA let me have a record accross which it was written that the record had been withheld from the CIA's general counsel. The purpose succeeded. He lied to my lawyer and said there were no records on me. In fact there were many, of which I ultimately obtained some. The present situation is that they prefer for me to have to sue to obtain the remaining records rather than avoid suit by giving them to me voluntarily.

It is because I deal with fact and rather than depend on footnoting alone generally publish facsimiles of previously secret records that I have been the object of special attention. The FBI was so frustrated over its inability to prevent my work or to find error in it that, from the records I have obtained, it actually connived with an agent who has since retired for him to file a spurious libel suit against me to waste me. He chickened, as they also did. Another agent spelled out how they would violate the law for what he regarded as something like the ultimate in patriotism, to "stop" me. He was likewise specific in reflecting his dedication to the First Amendment - it was over my writing, which they did not approve.

I have begun the deposit of all my records in an archive in a University system where it will be under the direction of a solid historian, a responsible man. While I would have done this in any event and had agreed to several years before I began to send records there, what led me to start earlier than I had expected was acute thrombophlebitis in both legs and thighs in 1975. The damage was irreversible before I was hospitalized. And in the middle of last year an arterial impairment or impairments was diagnosed. These are not conducive to longevity. I'll be 65 in a few months.

I am anxious to obtain all these secret spook defamations of me to be able to rebut them while I am alive, a provision of the Privacy Act, and for there to be an independent evaluation by those who use the archive I am leaving.

The CIA did have improper interests in me. Those extended to the domestic area. I have copies of some of the monitorings of my work and public appearances. Some of this was done through independent contractors. I do not know all the places it was done. It was done widely enough for me to believe that when it was known when I would be making an appearance an arrangement was made for reports to be filed in Langley.(Odd because I have never said the CIA offed JFK and have often said there is no reason to believe it and that I do not believe it.)

One of the places I did make appearances is San Diego. There was a well-intended committee there but it was nutty. My efforts to restrain it were not successful. I did make several college appearances under its auspices and I did receive extensive radio and TV attention. I do not know what if anything the CIA or the FBI did about it.There were also small gatherings.

It is always possible that far away from Washington as San Diego is the various offices there used independent judgement and would have nothing to do with such intrusions into what people say and believe and, as Jordqn also put it, such a waste of time and effort. It is possible that if I was the recipient of improper official attention it was when he was not there and he has no knowledge of it.

However, the CIA's interest in those of us who disagreed with the official account of the JFK assassination was extensive. What is less known is the extent of its interest in the King assassination.

With regard to both assassinations the Department of Justice had told two different federal courts that I know more about them than anyone in the FBI. I believe that this tended to make me a more attractive target.

And going back to 1971 the CIA has been stonewalling me on my FOIA and PA requests to such an extent that I have filed suit against it for fraud - from asking large sums of money from me and giving me no records in return. It does not even deny this is true. (The case, in federal district court in Washington, is C.A.77-1997.)

So, I am hopeful that Jordan may be in a position to help me in my effort to obtain the still-withheld records and to stop this kind of intrusion into perfectly proper if not as I believe essential domestic activity of Americans.

It has been my experience that where I can specify withheld records I either get them or an exemption of the Act is claimed. This is a situation that can be decided by the courts. In many efforts I have yet to sink a dry hole.

I do believe that if I am successful in this it will help accomplish what Jordan seeks. I have some other familiarity with that kind of waste of effort that could be used for necessary purposes from my own government experience of many years ago. It is not new. It also is not new in intelligence agencies. I encountered it in my first assignment in O.S.S. Everyone got lost in all that paper to the extent that everyone missed what was germane in it.

If he can help and is willing to help and if he wants confidentiality I can guarantee this to Jordan.

My thanks also to you and Kendall.

By the way, I have had no contact with your Washington bureau. Others use me to evaluate such releases as the recent ones of the FBI, most often to determine whether or not the material is new or unreported. Except for the internal bickering almost nothing reported in the recent stories is new. What was said to have been withheld from the Warren Commission had not been withheld. Some of the records, particularly Hoover's personal notes, not uncommonly were phoney. Some were cover-the-ass and self-serving falsehoods.

The situation is not easy for the most conscientious and competent of reporters, particularly those who hold strong beliefs. If your people want to ask me please tell them I do this all the time and regard it as part of my responsibilities. My phone is 301/473-8186.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg